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The Ann Maria.



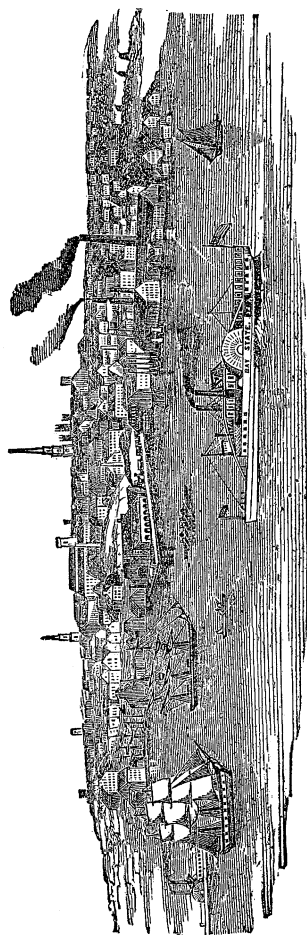
*Sail little ship on untried sea,
And if some soul shall shelter thee,
Leave thy light freight and gladly turn
To where thy waiting home-lights burn.*



FALL RIVER:

ALMY, MILNE & Co., PRINTERS, NEWS OFFICE.

1869.



The loss of this beautiful barque is among the saddest of my boyhood memories. Just one quarter century ago sailed she down this pleasant bay—sailed, never to return. Inexpressibly solemn is the thought of a vessel leaving port, the hearts of her crew buoyant with hope, and never being heard of more. There is some consolation in knowing where rest the forms of the dear departed.

The very absence of details makes the great fact of her loss, itself, a poem of mysterious musings; and a master mind might so enwreath it with the flowers of fancy and feeling as to draw many eyes and touch many hearts. And there are some souls yet so tender as to gladly welcome even these simple memorial lines.

THE ANN MARIA.

.....
.....
WHERE Massachusetts' southern bound
Winds Rogers' classic land around,
On eastern slope of Mount Hope Bay,
Fall River sits a queen to-day :—
Queen of the wonder-working loom !
Ye worthy rivals, give her room !
Her modest motto, " We will try !"
By honest toil is graven high.
Her myriad panes and gilded spires
Reflect the sunset's golden fires,
While, from the bay, her terraced light,
Seems as a lower heaven, at night ;
And, safely, ships sail up and down
By the rich radiance of her crown.

The sight is lovely on this hill,
Look when you may, look where you will :
Beneath the mild moon's mellow ray
Or in the burning beams of day :
Let these fair slopes and streams be seen,
Embossed in ice, embowered in green ;—
Their lesser views as brightly shine
As bolder beauties of the Rhine ;
Warble more sweet these little rills,
Than larger streams down loftier hills.

Looming across the beauteous bay,
 Two dreamy leagues, southwestern way,—
 Between the sky-and-ocean blue,—
 The home of Philip is in view.
 Upon its brown and rugged sides
 The red man's shadow still abides,
 And on its lasting slate appears
 The record of colonial years.
 Sharp is the slope from shore to cone,
 But every inch of it is throne :
 Well might that royal Indian brave
 Give freely up his life to save
 These lovely plains and waters fair
 From "white man's" ship and sharp ploughshare ;
 For from this summit one may view
 As fair a scene as hand e'er drew.
 Weird Warren's bells at evening chime,
 And mellow tones this mountain climb ;
 Calm Bristol nestles at its base,
 And in northwest the eye may trace
 The Providence that Williams found ;—
 Of all the land the holiest ground.
 When other States shall boast their miles,
 Rhode Island, greet that boast with smiles,
 Own that thou art the smallest State,—
 None hath a history so great !
 Well is that spot with beauty crowned,
 Where first, all men, full freedom found !

Look to the south ! pray tell me where
 Are lands more fertile, fields more fair ;
 Where sun or star more sweetly smiles
 Than on these Narragansett isles ?
 Where dauntless Ann became soul-free,
 And planted trees of liberty.
 Fair Aquiday ! no tropic strand
 Can pass the greenness of thy land,
 Still are thy children conscience-free,
 And health comes surging in thy sea.

From blue hills of the hazy north,
 The modest Taunton murmurs forth ;
 Like a true life it graceful bends
 To obstacles which heaven sends,
 Yet holds the tenor of its way
 With free-will offerings to the bay :
 Fringing the fields it flows between
 With vernal bloom or wintry sheen,
 Reflecting all the beauty found
 In heaven above or earth around,
 By "Dighton Rock" it flows as free
 As when was writ that mystery.
 Upon the west the Cole and Lee
 Run side by side in rival glee ;
 While down the eastern studded steeps
 Watuppa's offspring laughing leaps ;—
 Yet sports not till her work is done,
 In useful channels does she run ;—

Her waters cleanse the city's heart,
 Give life and joy to every part;
 Her sphere is small, her actions great!
 A thousand wheels turn by her weight,
 A million spindles hum her praise
 As she moves down her worthy ways.

No hoary legend we rehearse,
 No olden echoes tune this verse;
 We wander through no Rhenish town
 Whose vineyards blush and castles frown;
 No gleaming battle-axe is here,
 No shades of valiant knight appear,—
 Though stranger red man here once found
 His happiest home and hunting ground,
 And names of hill and stream still tell
 Of those who first upon them dwell;—
 Trace we a simple, truthful story
 Of modern love, and faith, and glory;
 See poetry of lowly life
 Spring from its sternest toil and strife!

But generation back we turn,
 Yet few the way-lamps which still burn;
 And then on these now crowded hills
 Stood little village and few mills.
 To find employ some had to roam;
 Most made the calling sea their home,

Which to their very hearth-stone rolls,—
 As God's love pulses to our souls,—
 Seeking the wealth he salted down
 For those who dare meet Ocean's frown.

Among the brave who drew the line,
 And whistled at the wrathful brine,
 The hero of this tale appears,
 A man of hopes, but not of fears :
 A stalwart frame, four cubits high,—
 A lynx would quail beneath his eye, —
 Yet tender as a child at heart,
 A single sigh his tears would start.

“What dangers, Sarah, I have passed ;
 God please, this cruise shall be my last !”
 (Thus often man God's will declares,
 Speaks as a prophet unawares,
 As thoughtless birds and brooks do raise
 Their daily tribute to his praise !)
 “One lucky voyage, if heaven please,
 Will give us competence and ease !”

“Go not once more,” his Sarah said,
 “My dreams of late are full of dread ;
 I cannot close my eyes to sleep,
 But some huge monsters of the deep
 Around me swim with ravn'ng maws,
 As they would cleave me with their jaws !”

“ But, darling dreamer, well you know
There is much need for me to go ! ”

“ With thee, though wolf were at the door,
I should enjoy a dry crust more,
Than all the viands men do bring
From foreign countries to a king ;
But little food or fire they need
Whose hearts and hopes are well agreed !
Yea, I will smile in roughest weather,
If we can only bide together ! ”

“ I cannot breathe in factory, wife,
It dries the essence of my life ;
These brawny arms it doth restrain,
And crowds the blood into my brain.
O ! for the mighty game God gave
To test the courage of the brave !
I scorn the ancient mailed knight,
His was a child-like, coward fight,
Shame, pent arenas of old Rome !
The mightiest foe, I meet at home :
Leviathans, which most men fear,
Have never laughed at my good ‘ spear,’—
I make them spit their blood for fire,—
’Tis I who laugh at their vain ire.”

“ And generous, Seth, as you are brave,
Your greatest foe you’d die to save :—

This very daring makes me fear
It were much better you were here !
You know our Will is getting old,
And Mary doth such charms unfold !—
One needs your strong arm to restrain,
You need the other's sweet refrain."

" If anything will break my rest,
It is these birdlings left in nest ;
These living types which we have passed ;
Ah, twofold cord, thou bindest fast !
Yes, you have touched me at the core,
But calmly I have thought it o'er :
'Tis for their sakes I dare the main,
That from it I may come again,
With means to give them culture due,
To make them highest joy to you.
'Tis our Great Father holds the sea, —
Trust him, my Sarah, and trust me.
I cannot now my word recall,
You know my honor is my all.
May all your future dreams be bright,
My ship must sail to-morrow night."

Seth's word was law, a law of love,
Like that which cometh from above.
With faltering hands they filled his chest,
With faltering hearts his cabin dressed ;

Mary nor mother thought aloud,
 Yet sadder hands ne'er sewed a shroud.
 But Time cares not for human care,
 He must his mighty message bear ;
 No earthly power can stay his wing,—
 Through strongest ties his scythe will swing.

“ Good bye, sweet Sarah, Mary dear ;
 Of you, my boy, good let me hear.
 Now, wife, no good thing do you lack,
 I'll foot the bills when I come back ;—
 My creditors feel no alarm,
 They know my honor, and my arm !
 Good-bye, good-bye ! Ye'll hear from me
 By every ship we speak at sea !
 And let no brother whaleman sail,
 Which brings me not a heavy mail ! ”

Seek through the land no lovelier bay
 Than where the Ann Maria lay,
 And bowing to her anchor there,
 She paged the waves with pictures fair.
 Her swan-like hull, her tapering masts,
 Seemed ill prepared for ocean blasts ;
 But crew feared not,—she had been “ tried ; ”
 They trod her deck with hope and pride :—
 The day she sailed school-boys were late,
 And when arrived drew her on slate.

“ My mate, the wind and tide are fair,
Rouse up the sleeping anchor there !
I long to see her foam and reel,
And show the lazy land her keel ;
I long to make the sea-horse prance
Beneath the spurring of my lance :—
No charioteer of ancient note
Could keep his steeds abreast my boat ;—
Break the last band and set us free ;
Good bye to land, all hail the sea !”

Then sturdy mate, with seeming joy,
Most promptly piped all hands ahoy :—
“ Come, boys, a song,—a song of cheer !
This is no time for sigh or tear ;
A few short months on ocean’s blue,
Again this pleasant bay we view.”

They did not see the sly-brushed tear,
The smothered sigh they did not hear ;
For he, too, finds it hard to part
From her whose face is on his heart.

“ Good bye to sweetheart and to home ;
’Tis but a pleasure trip we roam ;
So brace each soul and brace each sail
We must not lose this favoring gale !”

Than rang those manly voices clear
Till hills returned this song of cheer:—

“ Away! away! we sail to-day,
The wind is full and fair,
Let hands be strong and hearts be gay,
And voices fill the air !

Heave ho! heave ho! for we must go
To plough the rugged main,
And from the mighty ocean-field
Bring home the honest grain.

Bravo! bravo! aye now we go,
I feel your muscles knit ;
O, who would be a sailor free
Must lack not soul or grit !

We loves our homes, our friends indeed,
But soon we tire on shore ;—
Then bid us all a kind ‘ God speed’
As we sail forth once more !”

While gliding by fair Prudence Isle—
The hearts of crew all gay meanwhile,—
Was it some Paul or fear which said
“ Who bide that passing ship is dead !”

And as the barque ran rippling down,
 Where Adams' mighty bulwarks frown,
 The sentinel's careless "All is well!"
 "To those who on the firm earth dwell,"
 It seems to say when borne to ship,
 And Seth for once had quivering lip.
 Never saw he old Montauk light
 Look half so dim as on that night;
 "Perchance its keeper failed to trim,"
 Perhaps Seth's eyes were growing dim,
 May be 'twas caused by steady gaze
 Upon the moon's fast lessening rays:
 "Mate, that eclipse bodes us no good,
 I would forget it if I could!"
 For the true seaman's practiced eye
 Discerns the storm in fairest sky;
 He talks so much with winds and waves
 He hears first murmur in their caves,
 He notes the sea-harp's lightest string,
 The softest strains which mermaids sing.

Then that stout mate in tones of dread
 And low pitched voice in answer said;
 "It chills me, too, I know not why,—
 I could as frightened infant cry;—
 But cheer up, Seth, mid-sun to morrow
 Will make forget this midnight sorrow!"

“Yes, God’s the same on sea as land,
As mighty, merciful His hand.
We cannot from his presence steer,—
Yet why this unaccustomed fear?”

“Seth, let us go below and pray,
That the great Captain guide our way.”

Prayers reach above from down below,
Not made are they for form or show.
Broken the language uttered there,
God takes the meaning of a prayer
Sifts from it all of self or sin,
Before He lets the message in.
Picture of “Strength and weakness” see ;
Those sturdy men upon the knee,
With childlike faith and trembling lip
Asking their Lord to join the ship,
To guide them right in guiding crew,
To mark their track on ocean’s blue,
To fix “Faith’s form on Annie’s prow,
And swing Hope’s anchor at her bow !”

Thus much the pilot heard and saw,
As from the Ann he did withdraw,—
Dropping his trusty boat astern,
Heading her where his home lights burn,
Turning again to say good bye,—
There was some trembling in his cry,—

“ A full ship, Seth, and quick return,
To where your heart and home-fires burn !”

Thus said the land, good bye to sea,
Thus time spake with eternity.

Three months quick passed on land and sea ;—
Will homeward ran with childish glee ;
“ The Ann Maria, is spoken, Ma ;
Have any presents come from Pa ?”
“ Yes, Master Will, how do you do ?
I am the present sent to you !”

A human voice from form of bird
By every one is strangely heard
But of the startled boy, its tones
Entered his very heart and bones.
But soon he loved the parrot gay,
Teaching him many things to say ;
But of his sire would only tell,—
“ The sea is rough, but all is well !”

For Mary, loving, lovely girl,
Came beauteous box inlaid with pearl ;
To mother, richest rarest shell,
Which to the ear such sea-dreams tell ;
Yet, some way, Sarah had a fear
To put them fairly to her ear,

Seeming to feel that they might tell
 Things darker than she could bear well.
 Was she too weak, show childish fear ?
 All your soul utters dare you hear ?
 Feel you not weak some cross below,
 Pray you to pass no cup of wo !
 O ! there are murmurings in the sea,
 Unheard, unknown to you and me ;
 But souls grief-tuned to minor keys,
 Hear plaintive strains in every breeze.

Three throbbing years have passed away,
 And no ship crossed the Annie's way ;—
 Strange rumors floated on the street ;—
 “ The Ann Maria was very fleet,
 One load of slaves would pay them all !—
 Hard craft she'd be to overhaul !
 I do not know that it is true,
 But if I wanted master, crew,
 To do some quick and rugged work,
 Without a single soul to shirk,
 Give me that little bark for these ;—
 She's cruising in rich Indian seas ! ”

“ Seth was a sailor, rough but true.”

“ No knowing what the best may do,

Surrounded by a wicked band ;—
Have we no castaways on land ?

“ If in that crew I am deceived,
I have the last in man believed.”

“ I pity from my heart his wife,
Dead for three years to outward life !”

“ Pity her from your purse, my friend,
Who help the poor to Jesus lend.
To bear her aid I'm on my way ;
Invest in heavenly stock to-day ?”

The hypocrite had call from thence ;
'Tis easier dropping words than pence.

“ Seth so does love a glad surprise,—
Of late how weak have grown my eyes,
Some healing balm I sure must take,
As he would say, ‘ Do, for my sake.’
By daring, superhuman toil,
He means to crowd the Ann with oil,
Then canvass-press her through the sea,
And his own glad reporter be !
Ah ! it would be a bitter cup
If he should fill the vessel up,
And when her prow was turned to shore,
Some gale should keel the Annie o'er.

But no! that vessel has been tried,
 And never failed them who relied.
 Perchance the opposite is true,
 The whales some seasons are so few,
 And none can seize the mighty prey
 Unless they chance to cross their way.
 Kind soul! he's hoping every day
 To have some better news to say ;—
 I must not act a girlish part,
 But it's so hard to keep up heart !
 He may have seen such rugged weather,
 No passing ships could come together ;
 Some ship which has good news for me
 Far driven from her course may be.
 O! I wish Seth had never gone !
 My heart, home, hope, is so forlorn !
 Can he lie sick in foreign land,
 And fear to shock by stranger hand ?
 But I know this, he's true to me,
 And God to him will kindly be :
 Deep is the hollow of Thy hand,—
 On that firm rock alone I stand !”

Little the heart of childhood knows
 Of manhood's cares or manhood's woes !
 O! blameless boy, your tones of glee
 Add to your mother's misery.

“ To-morrow, ma, the Hunter sails,
And captain says he'll take our mails,
And will use great amount of care
To ask for father everywhere !”

“ Mary, I am so weak to-night,
My dear, good girl will have to write.”

And Mary wrote, with sigh and tear,
In other room, lest mother hear :

“ Pa, send one little word,
Our fainting souls to cheer ;
I know 'tis only three,
But seems like thirty year,
Since that bright sunny day
We saw the Annie sail ;—
O ! how we pray the Lord
To save from storm and whale !
O ! how we all would joy
To see your face once more !
Dear mother's very sick,—
She misses you so sore !”

“ Ma, I dislike to trouble you ;—
Where shall I mark the letter to ?”

“ It is so long since we did hear,
You can write ‘ Present ’ only, dear.
Please, Mary, get the Book and read,
(How often now that chart we need,)

‘Present or absent with the Lord.’
See if I make the words accord !”

Days grew to months, and months to years,
Yet not a single sign appears ;
Listening to every passing breeze,
For tidings from some unknown seas,
With glist’ning eyes and pallid lips,
Reading the names of home-bound ships,
To all who knew her silent woe,
She seemed the fairest type to show
How much one gentle soul can bear
Of fear, anxiety, despair.
(Why must such souls such sorrow bear ?
We do not know ;—she does, up there.)
And five more yearning years have passed
Since Seth spoke to his Sarah last.

“My soul shook with the sash last night,
Dark visions did my soul affright ;—
I saw a mighty, maddened whale,
Seth’s noble little ship assail,
I heard her oaken ribs give way,
I heard the prostrate seamen pray
As down she plunged,”—she said no more
Until her fainting fit was o’er.

Thank God, He now and then doth send
Terrestrial angels to attend :—

“ Mother, you’ve overworked of late,
That makes you in a nervous state,—
Dreams go by opposites, you know,
So let these dreadful pictures go !
Casting your care upon that Other,
Who sticketh closer than a brother,—
That ‘husband’ to each widowed heart,
That neither time nor death can part :
Keep up good heart, we yet may see
The greatest treasure of the sea ;—
Love and hope on, ’tis all we can ;
Call much on God ;—vain help of man ;
If we should see him never more.
Christ sailed with pa, he’ll reach the shore.
Last Sabbath’s lesson comforts me,
Where He saved those on Galilee.”

“ Yes, Mary, we must surely trust,
But then you know how weak this dust ;
It is so hard to read aright,
To walk by faith and not by sight,—
If known to Him is sparrow’s fall,
Will he wreck ark that holds our all ?

‘ They that—go down—to the sea in ships ;’—
Darling, forgive these faltering lips,—
And read the hundred and seventh psalm,
Where ‘ God maketh the storm a calm.’ ”

O ! light of life ; O ! lamp of love
Which lures the earth-wrecked soul above,
Points from earth's deepest wells of woe,
To where immortal fountains flow !
“ O ! fools and blind,” who shafts have hurled
Against this lighthouse of the world !

“ Mother, I heard the boys say
Some whaling ship was cast away !
But as I reached them, some one cried,
‘ Ho ! for the pond,—let’s take a slide !’
Could father’s noble ship be lost,
The prettiest hull that ever tossed ?
But what a silly question, though,
Where danger was he would not go !”

“ Yes, Willie, father’s ship could sink,
But—then—of course we—do—not think
The good Maria has gone below,—
We know not what may happen, though !”

“ How thoughtful father, and how kind,
To leave her beauteous form behind !
Last night, as I in slumber lay,
That picture seemed to fade away.”

“ Father, Will, had no faith in dreams ;—
Often my brain with fancies teems,
But I, too, think it the better way
Not to dream over our dreams by day ;—

Sure, there's enough to think and do
In what is real, present, true !”

The mother's eyes were on the bay
Where last she saw the Annie lay ;
“ O, tell me, Lord, what words to speak,
When news from ‘ Pa’ the children seek !
Dears, ‘ there is sorrow on the sea.’
I sometimes fear that—it may be,
The Ann Maria was cast away,
And—all—on board ;—come, let us pray !

‘ O ! Lord of land and ocean,
These waiting hearts You see ;—
Sweet peace or wild commotion,
Are but Thy just decree !

Art ‘Thou our only ‘ husband,’
Our only Father, Thou ?
Thy will, not mine, be done,—
In meekness we would bow.’ ”

“ Father was not afraid to die,
‘ A good quick trip from earth to sky,’
He used to pray that God would give,
That half alive he might not live,
And sink away by slow degree,
As settling ship in death-calm sea ;
Like Enoch, he would walk below,
And then like him to heaven go !

God's chariots, ma, can wheel the sea,
And his true prayer may answered be.
Come with me to the kitchen, Will,
Mother may rest if room is still."

If aught on earth is from above,
'Tis a pure sister's ardent love ;—

"Dear father we shall never see,
And, now, the work for you and me
Is to do gladly all we may
To aid and cheer poor mother's way,
I shall go working in the mill,
But you must keep your studies still,
And press them on fast as you can,
And every way be mother's "man."
Be a good boy for father's sake,
For mother's heart is nigh to break ;
If we are smart at morn and night,
We'll make her work both glad and light.

Ye dreamers who so much admire,
The noble dames of ancient lyre,
See of your heroines the queen
In this frail girl of seventeen !
She little knew of court or fame,
And never dreamed of deathless name ;
Yet never knight or royal fair
Had braver soul to do or dare.

Nor did her will from pride arise,
She sought to do His in the skies ;
Pure piety in deeds was shown,
And she forgot herself alone.
Behold her stock for life's great trade ;—
How dark a dowry fortune made ;—
A widowed mother, poor, in pain,
And, sadder yet, unbalanced brain ;
An Aunt, full-blinded to be led,
A younger brother to be fed,
Life, love and light of such was she ;—
Unveil a lovelier frame for me.

The summers of a whole decade,
Saw flowers bud, and bloom, and fade,
Yet not a breath from off the sea
Spake of the dreadful mystery ;
Most had forgot the portless ship,
Her very name had left the lip ;
Still, in some hearts it meant despair,
As her dark figure floated there.

Seth had a neighbor, kind and true,
No broader soul the village knew :
One whom you think you've "seen before,"—
A heart so full it runneth o'er,
Upon whose features you may trace,
As index on a dial face,
The deep, sweet thoughts which well below,
With smiles or tears for others' woe ;

The kind of whom you "ask the way,"
They seem so glad good things to say.
One night,—though hope was very weak,—
He nerved his loving heart to speak.

"We've lived score years, now, side by side,
Would you—dare—stand with me as bride?"

"Stephen, your wife I cannot be,
Lean on no broken staff like me;
'Twould be a bloodless hand I gave,—
My heart is in an ocean grave."

"Sweet resurrection take and give,
And let us for each other live!"

"No! though 'twere buried two score year,
And then my husband should appear,
'Twould bring red blood to my old cheek,
'Twould nerve these hands, however weak."

"But, Sarah, Seth will never come,
He's safely in his heavenly home!"

"May be, but I'll in patience wait:—
I yet may meet him at this gate.
(Hush, hush, vain hope! how many years
Can ye bear up these dreadful fears?)

"O! open your heart's gate to me;—
In mine you long have wandered free!"

“ Go, seek some unpledged, unbroken heart ;
From my first plight no blow can part.”

“ I seek not merely to protect ;—
In thy pure heart, so rudely wrecked,
Remaining pearls of price I see,—
May I not hope they shine for me ?”

“ The ring Seth gave me has no end.”

“ 'Tis broken !”—

“ He alone can mend !”

“ I found my Susan at your side,
You nursed my Lily when she died !”

For when all on the land was tried,
To stay the drooping at his side,
He did accept Seth's offer free,
To “ Rock her gently on the sea !”
Bore her with care to Azore isles,
Where longer, brighter summer smiles ;
But neither land nor sea could save ;
They hid their treasure 'neath the wave.

“ Like him she sleeps her long, sweet sleep,
Down in the coral groves so deep.
You're like my lost in mind and mien,
Twin roses fairer ne'er were seen.

I'm not like Seth in face or force,
(The modest lover did discourse.)
In the next passing hundred men,
We shall not see his like again ;—
But Sarah, let me prove to you
I am as tender and as true ;
Come, let us twine Life's broken thread,
Love for the living and the dead !”

“ In suffering, Stephen, we are one,
But closer tie there can be none ;
Pure heart, kind hand I gladly lend,
In every office of a friend.
Your heart, your hand, I know full well,
For deeds and years their virtues tell ;—
Such as I have I give to thee,—
My broken heart is on the sea !”

Poor Sarah shut her cottage door,
And heart to hope forever more.
And now was seen love's noblest power,
For Stephen, from that fateful hour,
Ne'er pressed his honest suit again,
But took his place with stricken men ;
Yet felt no rancor, or forgot
God hath the casting of man's lot ;
Never allowed his heart grow cold,—
His hand was open as of old ;

Cared not increase his little store,
But that he might give needy more.
The widow and the orphan knew
That all his meeting talk was true,
And those who had no other friend,
For "Uncle Stephen" used to send ;
But best of all he loved to cast
Fruit-laden boughs where Sarah passed.

To dimes her fingers could not cling,
Close dealing seemed a dwarfing thing ;
Like many, she had never learned
" A penny saved is penny earned !"
And that so many mortals try
To steal to heaven through needle's eye.
Her life was active, but had found
Enough to do in household bound.
And Seth had spoiled for sharp-turned trade,
For house, as ship, each cruise he'd lade
With all that would for seasons keep ;
He loved to think, when on the deep,
To stores his wife had access free,
As on the " Bonnie Ann" had he.
" Now, Sarah, you for nothing lack,
I'll foot the bills when I come back !"

Of many friends who seem so true,
Happy whom trial leaves a few ;

And Sarah soon was made to see
The slender stay of charity.
She worked her way the best she could,
But had to eke e'en fire and food,
And oftentimes would have wanted more,
Had not good Stephen passed her door.

“ She should stop mourning for the dead,
And labor for the live !” some said.
And there seemed cause for some reproof,
For,—keeping from all life aloof,—
She dreamed much precious time away
In vacant gazing down the bay.
“ For children's sake she ought to wed,
And Stephen's just the man !” they said.

But she was judged from outward things,
For God alone sees secret springs ;
She thought it was a nobler part
To keep than give a broken heart.
How few have lived and not forgot
“ Lest ye be judged, ye must judge not.”
And when she tried to rouse her mind,
She found it hard fit work to find ;
She was so little wordly “ wise,”
What men called “ shrewdness” she thought “ lies.”
Her heart and nerve began to fail ;
And Mary, too, was growing pale !

“O! how it would grieve Seth to know
His darling one was forced to go
From the glad sunshine of these hills,
To wear her life out in the mills !
She tries to keep my courage good,
But she is feeding me her blood ;
Her languid limbs and eyes reveal
What she in love would all conceal ;
Fast failing is my Mary, too,
My God ! my God ! what shall I do ?
And Will of late has learned to roam,
I cannot keep my boy at home ;—
This wears upon his sister meek,
His sins are written on her cheek.
Gone is her sharp, pure repartee,
Which was of every group the glee ;
The glistening, flashing of that eye
Which could turn laughter into cry !”

Seeking the poppy's juice for rest,
She soon was bowed at its behest,
And took, and took, and took again,
For spirit's woe or body's pain.
How great her sin ? I do not know !
He without sin the stone may throw.

In mid-day drowse, or midnight dream,
It made her brain with fancies teem ;

Her spirit wandered glad and free,
 But most it hovered o'er the sea.
 Ofttimes she saw the Ann Maria,
 And all her being was afire.
 Magician touched her with his wand,
 And bore, with ship, to fairy land :
 Her sails made silk, her hull pure gold,
 And ship and crew could not grow old.
 'Mid spicy isles her course was sped,
 Ambrosial fruits her crew were fed :
 Rich perfume filleth every breeze
 Which wafts them over stormless seas !
 But when she waked and vision fled
 She felt like one left with the dead.

Disease increased as seasons sped,
 And sinking Sarah kept her bed ;
 " Since the sad sun Seth sailed away,
 I have not known one joyous day ;
 As Noah's dove I sail the sea,
 And find no rest till Seth I see.
 Twould soothe the anguish of some hours
 If I could deck his grave with flowers ;—
 But O this living death to bear,
 For now his grave is everywhere !
 If I but knew his voyage was o'er,
 And he would meet me on that shore,
 I should not fear death's narrow tide,
 It could but for an hour divide ;—

But mindful Mary, wilful Will,
For these I would bear living still,—
But then my mind and frame so wrecked ;
How little I can them protect !”

With every tide that flowed in bay,
Her feeble life-blood ebbd away.

One evening, 'neath the sweet moonlight,
She seemed to feel new life and light,—
“ I have just dreamed, or angels tell,
Seth breathed a message in that shell !
O ! bring it ! bring it quick to me,
For I must solve this mystery !”
And quickly was the treasure brought,—
But Seth and shell were gone from thought ;
The mystery indeed was known,—
Her spirit to its Lord had flown.
Many an eye for tears saw not,
Never a witness has forgot,
How blind Maria felt the dead,
And in heart-broken accents said,
Laying her hand on Sarah's brow,
“ There is one less to lead me now !
This world was dark enough before :—
How can I grope it any more !”

Then Mary,—child of peace and prayer,
Stood as a guiding angel there.

"Lift your soul's eyes, dear aunt, above,
 Where to the fountains of his love,
 God leads the weakest of his train,
 Free from all darkness, tears and pain.
 We who are left, the best we may,
 Will lead you till that cloudless day ;
 Mother will meet you on that shore,
 Where meeting friends will part no more."

But there are sorrows worse than death,
 Which make the soul pant hard for breath ;—
 No dart of his so deep can rend
 As wounds of a deceitful friend.
 Mary had loved a noble mein,—
 For all of good was outward seen,—
 All was most lovely to the sight,—
 A demon in the garb of light,
 He sought her heart but to betray,
 He took her hand to lead astray.
 She met the breath of low desire
 With words which burned from soul afire ;
 They made his thrice-seared conscience sore,
 The hardened sinner blushed once more.
 "And did you hope an easy prey
 Because my father was away ?
 My pureness all your arts defy !—
 My heavenly father's ever nigh :
 Sir, I am poor, and I am lone,
 But to thee be it quickly known,

All earthly wealth and earthly fame
Are but as naught to my good name.
True to my God, to duty true.
(Why does he suffer such as you ?
Yet Christ did feel the wicked's art,
Man's crown of thorns, and curse, and dart.
Then shall I not, unmurmuring, be
Partaker of his agony ?)
Pure in my heart, and clean in hand,
I follow Jesus through this land,
And when the path he points is trod,
My soul in peace shall see its God.
Depart ! O man ! and sin no more,—
I'll pray for thee till time is o'er !”
But ah ! the sword had double blade,
And its back stroke the smiter slayed ;
For all the Future's lights grew dim,—
They had been kindled but for him.

And soon another shadow fell
On the dark spot where Mary dwelt ;
The baffled fiend found easy prey,
And soon her brother led astray ;
Led him,—now in advancing youth,—
Far from the peaceful paths of truth.
Taught him the passage ways to Hell ;—
That sister's anguish who can tell ?

Like the first Mary, oft she cried,
 "Hadst Thou been here he had not died !
 Yet set the 'dead' in sins now free,
 For all my hope is stayed on Thee !"
 Yet looked she not alone to prayer,
 She watched his every step with care.
 Hours that she should in slumber be,
 Were spent in searching shore and lea,
 And oft her needed food forgot,
 Because the Prodigal was not.
 With arts and love of sister true,
 Again to home and heaven she drew ;—
 But darker, darker seemed his fate,—
 Gone but this hope : " God saveth late !"

Earth's glorious "Groom" five circuits ran ;—
 Is Mary's faith renewed in man ?
 That question she must settle now,
 For Stephen's son, before, doth bow.

"Parent and loved God has removed."

"And thus you meek and patient proved ;—
 I've felt the trials you've been through ;
 The future I would share with you ;
 And pleasures, too, for darkest night,
 Oft followed is by morning bright.
 When young I've heard my father say,
 'A happier pair ne'er joined in play !'"

“ We had bright days when we were young,
Then all life’s sweetest songs we sung.”

“ They echo still within my heart,
Same melody your words impart.
My Mary, (let me call thee mine,)
Clusters yet rich are on the vine,
And wines are said to be, you know,
The better as they older grow !”

“ I know we loved to read together,—
I loved your sled in snowy weather.”

“ Then why not read life’s future so,—
Still in those pleasant child-paths go ?”

“ I never did those hours forget,—
And have some little keepsakes yet :
I will confess your shy-dropped flowers
Have fragrance shed on barren hours !”

“ I never read of flowers in books,
But learned their lessons from your looks ;—
And I confess to you, to-day,
The sweeter hopes then hid away.
That sled, this arm, is waiting yet,—
The ‘coach’ we must together get !”

“ Rise, Seth, you shall not bow to me,
I am the one unworthy thee !”

“Not till my heart you do assure,
Its years of fear shall not endure.”

“Seth, is this feeling true and deep,
A well whose waters ever keep?”

“Since my heart opened 'neath your eyes,
Its waters never ceased to rise.
A living stream to thee I bring,
Of which thou art both end and spring ;
Nor flow the tides to moon more true,
Than my heart-currents set to you.”

(“I am not worthy of man's love,
How then of His, who, from above,
Came down to seek His wandering sheep ;
My hand and heart, O ! Saviour, keep !)
Seth, I am not the joyous girl,
You used to tease for ‘just one curl !’ ”

“The pictures that true heart-plates bear,
Do never fade—are made to wear.
I have been more, and thou with me,
Than you have known ;—full curls you see !”

“The picture whence ?”

“Your mother gave
But just before we made her grave ;
And the sweet smile came with it, too,
‘I give my darling girl to you !’ ”

“ Your name is Seth, and—I—might trust.”

“ Sarah, there is some truth in dust !”

“ Did I not fear I should add cares !”

“ I take the angel all awares !”

Holy the compact entered there ;
Two Christian hearts were joined by prayer !

How swiftly flew the happy hours,
Preparing for the nuptial bowers :—
Yet ! quicker flew death's failless dart,
These souls, now one, to cleave apart,
Just as their full life was begun ;—
The rising was the setting sun ;
For to himself did dark Death say,
“ Their bridal is my funeral day !”
Still Mary tried to live on will,
But deepest love nor highest skill,
Her lovely spirit long could stay
In its o'erworked and crumbling clay.
If you have wrestled, hour by hour,
To hold death back from household flower,
Seth's suffering spirit you know well ;—
If you have not, I cannot tell ;
Best joy “ unspeakable ” we name ;—
There is a sorrow all the same.

There was no storm in Mary's breast,—
Calm as the sun she sank to rest ;
To death through perfect suffering came,
Yet all her trust was Jesus' name.

“ My parents wait me on the shore,
And your voyage, Seth, will soon be o'er !
A little while and you will see
Three angel forms awaiting thee !

And now, my love, one anchor more
Holds my soul but to Time's rough shore ;
If I could Will a christian see,
My soul would shout her ‘ Victory !’—
What sound is that ?”

“ A ship has come,
And cannon speak her welcome home !”

With face all bronzed on foreign strands,
Her brother soon before her stands :—
“ O have I just returned from sea
To see you sail eternally ?
But I've good news your soul to cheer !”

“ Quick, brother, quick, the harps I hear.”

“ Our sire I saw not on the sea,
But the Great Father has found me ;

He drew me from the sensual swine
In answer to those prayers of thine !”

And now all earthly troubles cease ;
“ I thank thee, Lord, for this sweet peace !
Thine, Thine in life,—Thou mine in death,
‘ Like—to—the—angels ;’ meet—me—Seth !”

Those still, sweet lips, Seth slowly pressed :—
“ Submit, my soul ;—He knoweth best !”

Through winter's white and summer's green,
Father and son for years were seen,
Decking two graves with fragrant flowers,
Talking or musing there for hours
Say, was this spending time unwise ?
Are graves good lookouts for the skies ?
There are two doors to every tomb ;—
One swingeth heavenward from its gloom ;
At earthward gate, Faith's calm, quick ear,
The song of angels oft can hear.
Are all the ransomed harps alike ?
They think they know whose fingers strike.

And you may read on cen'taph near,—
Which those same loving hands did rear,—

“ Seth's ship sailed out, but never came in,—
A good quick trip o'er this sea of sin !”

